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ADDRESS

OF

THE HAMILTON BRANCH

OF THE

BRITISH AMERICAN LEAGUE,

WITH THE

BY-LAWS,

FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE ASSOCIATION.

HAMILTON:

PRINTED AT THE SPECTATOR OFFICE.

1849.

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JUN 20 1935

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ADDRESS.

WHEN a number of men associate together for any particular purpose, and hold out invitations to their fellow-subjects to join their ranks, an explanation of the objects for which they have united is naturally expected.

Every man, unbiassed by prejudice, who looks calmly upon the condition of the Colony, and reflects on events as they pass before him, must admit that a state of depression, uncertainty, and well-founded dissatisfaction, exists throughout the land. Possessing a country of almost boundless extent—a climate of acknowledged salubrity—a soil, the fertility of which is not surpassed—a people intelligent, enterprising, and industrious, and having the means of attaining competence and happiness within the reach of all—we are evidently making but little progress. The blessings which Providence has, with a bounteous hand, scattered around us, are passed by unregarded. Wrangling and turmoil have taken the place of peace and contentment. Men are contending earnestly for a shadow, whilst the substance is permitted to escape unnoticed. Our fathers cleared the forests, and laid the foundation of goodly cities: their sons, instead of imitating so noble an example, and striving manfully, shoulder to shoulder, to develope the incalculable resources of the favored land which they inherit, are struggling but to reach and hold the reins of power; or, still more deplorable, are engaged in perpetuating a warfare of races.

The transcript of the British Constitution which has been bestowed upon us, has either been perverted from its original purpose, or is unsuited for a Colony so peculiarly situated as ours. The Legislative Union of the Provinces has but engendered discord and disunion among the people. The nicely balanced Estates of the Realm, which form the boast of every Briton, are, in this Province at

present, entirely unknown. The Legislative Council has been rendered subservient to, and is but an echo of the House of Assembly; and the Representative of Her Majesty is held, by his advisers, to be responsible solely to the people whom he governs, without any deference being paid to the power by which he is appointed.

Instead of becoming an united, prosperous Province—British in fact as well as in name—we are hampered and entirely controlled by a Race cherishing prejudices, which, for centuries, have descended from father to son, and which threaten, in our day, to lead to the most serious and deplorable consequences. Apart from their bitter prejudices and silly dreams of Nationality, entertained despite the rapid influx of a British population, the leaders of the people who inhabit the Eastern section of the Province, have systematically opposed all improvement and progress, whether social or political;—and, instead of passing laws and adopting customs calculated to render the Province essentially British, and thus afford the fullest liberty and happiness to their credulous and ill-informed countrymen, these leaders have perpetuated a crude Feudal system, which has proved too onerous even for the country from which they boast their origin.

To comprehend the vast power which the French population exercise over the affairs of the Province, we have but to reflect upon the cordial unanimity with which they act upon every question that arises, whilst the British inhabitants, following the example of all really free governments, are divided into parties entertaining quite distinct and opposite opinions upon important public questions. The union of the French, with even the weakest of these parties, is almost certain to give them a preponderance sufficient to control the administration; and as those who possess the power are naturally enabled to dictate their terms of support, we find one section of the Province made subservient to the other, and laws forced upon Upper Canada, despite the remonstrances and opposition of her representatives, which are not extended to, and would not be tolerated in, Lower Canada. By this means public opinion is disregarded, and can scarcely be brought to

bear upon those who control the affairs of the country. The legislation of the Session just closed shows, further, that the French are determined on adding, if possible, to the great influence which they already possess. Their Representation scheme, which was barely defeated, provided for an increase of French over British constituencies in Lower Canada of fully one-third; and the Election Bill, which is now the law of the land, extends the franchise to French settlers possessing merely bonds for deeds, or contracts for the purchase of lands which they occupy; whilst in Upper Canada, the same class of settlers are deprived of all privileges, and even Freeholders must have held their titles a longer period than the law previously provided. So glaring a case of injustice and partiality is quite sufficient to show the real designs of our French rulers, and the impossibility of reconciling them to a constitutional mode of procedure.

Turning from the political and social to the commercial condition of the Colony, we are equally unable to express satisfaction, or reconcile ourselves to the existing order of things. Financial embarrassments, and every difficulty calculated to retard the advancement of the Province, stare us in the face, with but little apparent prospect of improvement. The various expedients attempted in order to lessen our troubles, have proved worse than useless. They have but added to the load which we were unable to move.

The advantages which we formerly possessed in the markets of the Mother Country have been taken from us, and we have been unable to obtain anything in return. The balance of trade is largely against us. We cannot exchange our productions for those of other countries, except under great disadvantages, and we are unable to dispose of them at aught approaching a remunerating price at home. Our manufactures are depressed; our imports greatly exceed our exports; our mechanics are, at their own doors, barely able to compete with foreigners, whilst they are studiously excluded from a market abroad; and every branch of industry is struggling against the unparalleled depression which exists throughout the land.

To add to the discontent which such a state of affairs is calculated to create, the expenses of Government are excessive, and constantly increasing; whilst measures are passed into law which are totally unsuited to this young and comparatively poor country. A mass of uncalled for and ill-digested legislation finds its way annually into our statutes; and one act is not thoroughly tested ere another, entirely novel, and establishing directly opposite principles, is forced into operation, for an equally brief and uncertain existence.

It is for the purpose of taking these matters, and others which it is at present unnecessary to enumerate, into consideration, that the British American League, with which we have associated ourselves, has been formed.

The originators of the Association do not presume to express an opinion, or decide upon the remedy which may be applied. They lay the subject open to their fellow countrymen, and invite their co-operation in adopting the most feasible mode of bringing about a more healthy state of affairs. A Convention, to be composed of Delegates from each branch, according to numbers, to meet at some central place, will afford a favorable opportunity for deliberation; and for deciding upon the course which, under the circumstances, should be pursued. The maintenance, under all circumstances, of the connexion of this Colony with the Parent State, and the recommendation of such measures as are calculated to strengthen and unite us together, and make us in every respect an integral portion of the mighty Empire of which we form a part, will be the first and most important duty of those who now address you.

Inviting the attention of the inhabitants of the Western Country to the Circular of the Presiding Officers in Montreal, which has been extensivly published, we solicit the countenance and co-operation of all who desire to take a part in the present movement.

JOHN YOUNG, PRESIDENT.
ROBERT R. SMILEY, COR. SECRETARY.
A. LOGIE, RECORDING SECRETARY.

BY-LAWS

OF

THE HAMILTON BRANCH

OF

THE BRITISH AMERICAN LEAGUE.

I.—The name of this Association shall be, provisionally, THE HAMILTON BRANCH OF THE BRITISH AMERICAN LEAGUE.

II.—The object of the League shall be—the maintenance and promotion, by all Constitutional means, of the general interests of the Province.

III.—Any person signing the Register, and paying an Annual Subscription of not more than 5s., or less than 1s. 3d., shall be a [illegible] of the League.

IV.—The League shall [illegible] he *first* Wednesday of each Month, in [illegible]d at such hour as the Executive Comm[illegible] from time to time appoint.

V.—The Annual Meeting of the League, for the Election of Officers, and the transaction of other business, shall be held on the first Wednesday of August.

VI.—Special Meetings of the League shall be held whenever summoned by the President; and he shall be bound to issue such Summons on the written application of any twenty or more Members, stating the special business in question.

VII.—Every Member, *on paying his Subscription*, shall be furnished with a Ticket of Membership; and no person, who has not received such Ticket, shall be admitted to any of the Meetings of the League.

VIII.—The Officers of the League shall be elected annually *by ballot*, or otherwise; and shall consist of—a President, four Vice-Presidents, a Corresponding Secretary, a Recording Secretary, and a Treasurer.

IX.—These Officers, together with nine other Members to be chosen at the same time, shall constitute the Executive Committee of the League.

X.—The President shall preside at the Meetings of the League, or of the Executive Committee, and preserve order therein. In either case, he shall only be entitled to a casting vote.

XI.—The Vice-Presidents, in the order of seniority, shall perform all the duties of the President during the absence or illness of that Officer.

XII.—The Corresponding Secretary shall, under the superintendence of the Executive Committee, conduct the correspondence of the League, of which he shall keep a record.

XIII.—The Recording Secretary shall keep an accurate record of the transactions of the League, and of the Executive Committee.

XIV.—The Treasurer shall receive and take charge of the Funds of the League; he shall pay all drafts drawn on him by the President, and countersigned by the Recording Secretary, and none other; and shall keep a regular account of the financial concerns of the League.

XV.—The Executive Committee shall have full power to superintend the correspondence of the League; to appropriate its funds; and generally to conduct the affairs thereof, in accordance with these Rules.

XVI.—The Executive Committee shall meet weekly, on such evenings and under such regulations as they may from time to time subscribe; and shall also meet at other times when specially summoned by the President. At all Meetings of the Executive Committee, *seven* shall form a quorum.

XVII.—On the occurrence of any vacancy in the Executive Committee, the same shall be filled at the next Monthly Meeting of the League, by the election of a Member to serve until the next Annual Election.

XVIII.—The President and Vice-Presidents of the *Township Branches* of the League, within the bounds of the Gore District, shall be considered Honorary Members of the Hamilton Branch, and eligible to attend its Monthly Meetings.

XIX.—No alteration shall be made in these Rules, unless at a general Meeting of the League, after notice of the intended motion at the general Meeting immediately preceding.

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